

10 September 2008
Holy Cross Day (transferred)

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

Jesu Juva

“The Cross is Our Only Theology”
Text: John 12:20-33; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

I'm sure those Greeks had a good reason to want that, not just curiosity. Perhaps they had some questions. Or maybe they were confused and needed teaching, or advice, or direction. Jesus seemed like a good place to go.

It is that way today as well. Many people seek out Jesus when they have questions, worries, or need advice. Tomorrow is the seventh anniversary of the 9-11 terrorist attacks, and on that day and after, many people wanted to see Jesus and ask: *Why? Why did this happen? Why did you let it happen?*

For lots of reasons, we are often like those Greeks. We would like a meeting with Jesus, to ask Him about lots of things. Maybe for you, it would be about your life or health, your job or your future, your relationships or family. This is a difficult and often confusing world, filled with worries and uncertainty and unknowns. We would like to see Jesus and find out the answers, to make sense of it all.

But here's the thing: Jesus didn't come to be our answer man. He isn't an advice columnist, or a fortune teller laying out the future for us. He's not here to solve all our problems, or fix our broken relationships. If that's the Jesus we're looking for, then we'll probably be disappointed, as some (or many) are today. We won't get to see that Jesus.

Instead, in response to the request of the Greeks to see Him, Jesus starts talking about where He is to be seen, and where He has come to meet us - **and that is the cross**. If we want to see Jesus, that is where we must see Him. If we want answers, there are our answers. If we want to know Him, we must know Him there. For the cross is His “office” (if you will) - the place where Jesus has come to do His work for us. To go to the cross is why He came, that **when [He] is lifted up from the earth** [on the cross], [He] **will draw all people to Himself**.

And so the answers to our questions and searching is the cross.

Does God love you? There is Jesus crucified because He loves you. There is a love greater than any in this world. Greater than we could ever imagine.

Does God keep His promises? There is Jesus crucified because God kept His promise to send a Saviour.

Will God save you? There is Jesus crucified for your sins and raised for your justification, that you may be saved.

Does God care about what happens to me? About what is happening to me? There is Jesus crucified for you because God does care, enough to come and do something about the sin in this world.

Does God see what is happening to me? There is Jesus crucified for you, forsaken Himself, so that you will never be forsaken, or out of His sight.

Now to be sure, we could ask some questions here that the cross does not answer, **but any question the cross does not answer is an answer not for us to know.** For then faith would not be necessary - we would know everything and have to believe nothing. We would trust our wisdom, knowledge, and answers, instead of trusting in Jesus. And gaining all that in our life here, we would lose our life in heaven.

And so Jesus doesn't give us all the answers - He instead gives us the cross, that we trust in Him and live, and not trust in ourselves and die. To trust in Him is harder, to be sure! But easier is not always better.

That is why St. Paul says that ***we preach Christ crucified***, for there is no other preaching that can save us. No other preaching that can give us the answers that we need, even if not all the answers that we want. And there is no other preaching that is the power and wisdom of God for us.

Now, the world will disagree, saying that knowledge - not faith - is power, and that wisdom - not trust - is our way through this world. And therefore faith and trust are just a crutch for those who do not have enough knowledge and wisdom to make it through this world on their own. Perhaps. But we're not just trying to make it through this world - we know there is more to life than that! For the reality that we see here in this world and life is but the tip of the iceberg to a reality that far exceeds our senses and expectations. The reality of everlasting life. And to that reality and life, there is only one way, one door, and that is the cross. That through the death and resurrection of Jesus our sins be forgiven, we pass through death with Him, and so also rise with Him into a life that will never end.

To just make it through this life is too small a thing for Jesus - He wants much more for us than that! And the cross points us to that greater reality. And so instead of answering all our questions about what is happening in this *little* reality, the cross

points us to the *greater* by *not* answering - to raise our hearts and minds beyond the here and now, and to the One who controls the here and now and everything else. To trust that He who came to be with us is with us still - with us in the preaching of His Word, the giving of His forgiveness, the washing of His Baptism, and the feeding of His Supper. And in all these means, with us with His cross. With His dying and rising, His forgiveness, His new life. With the power and wisdom of God. A power and wisdom that yes, may look foolish to the world - but as St. Paul said: ***the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.***

And so ***we preach Christ crucified.*** In the Church and in our lives. By our words and by our deeds. For we have no other answers, no other life, no other wisdom, no other strength. As Luther would say: *the cross is our only theology.* Not because our theology is so small, but because the cross says it all.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.